



The School Psychologist

Problem Solving and the Role and Function of School Psychologists

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Mapping a vision for the future: Problem Solving

- **Problem Solving – promise of the future for school psychologists**
 - Growing concerns with inadequacies noted in traditional models that dominate current practice
 - Recognition of the critical need for reforms in our practices to address increasing numbers, complexity, and severity of educational and mental health problems facing children/youth
 - Increasing evidence of the utility of alternative approaches in improving educational outcomes.
- **Disparity between:**
 - Actual and preferred roles of school psychologists
 - “What is” (i.e. refer-test-place) and “what should be” (i.e., data-driven problem-solving)
 - Recommended best practices by leading scholars and professional organizations

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Source of the “traditional” role: Refer-Test-Place

- Ability X Treatment Interaction (ATI) Cronbach, 1957
 - Aptitude = “any characteristic of the person that affects his response to treatment”
 - Assumptions of ATI “a person learns more easily from one method than another, and this best method differs from person to person, and that such between-treatment differences are correlated with tests of ability and personality” (p. 681)
 - Psychologists should consider how aptitudes might interact with certain aspects of treatment to attenuate effects.
 - We should design treatments to fit individuals or groups of individuals with certain aptitudes or aptitude patterns.

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ATI Into Practice

- Tests developed to assess and classify students according to preferred learning modalities or underlying processes (perceptual-motor, auditory, etc.)
- Special education researchers began designing instruction according to assessed patterns or modalities (e.g. Kirk, 1968, Kephart, 1960, Dunn, 1979)
- Widespread appeal, with absolutely no empirical evidence!
- School psychologists role in the ATI process – careful assessment in processing and modality issues.
- One survey (Arter & Jenkins, 1977) reported 99% of teachers believed a child’s modality strengths and weaknesses should be a major instructional planning consideration.
- Thus, the teacher refers, the school psych tests, and team places...the refer-test-place model

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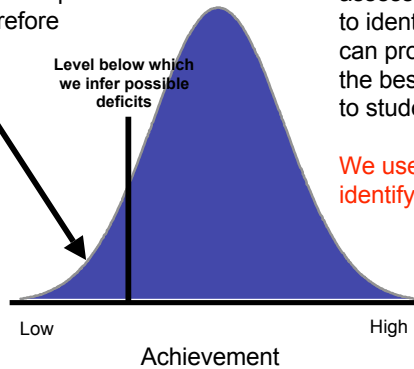
Deficit Model



Assumption:

In every distribution of kids, some of them have specific deficits and therefore will fail to learn.

Level below which we infer possible deficits



Historical Practice:

The job of the assessor is to assess students to identify their deficits so we can provide services. We use the best tools available, matched to students' presumed deficits.

We use these data to help identify what and how to teach.



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Source: David Tilly (2005)

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Oh-Oh – a Retraction!

- ATI problematic (Cronbach, 1975)
 - “once we attend to interactions, we enter a hall of mirrors that extends to infinity” (p. 119)
 - “short run empiricism is ‘response sensitive’...one monitors responses to the treatment and adjusts it, instead of prescribing a fixed treatment on the basis of a generalization from prior experience with other person or in other locales”. (p. 126)
- Problem solving approach = “short run empiricism” (Reschly & Yssekdyke, 2002)

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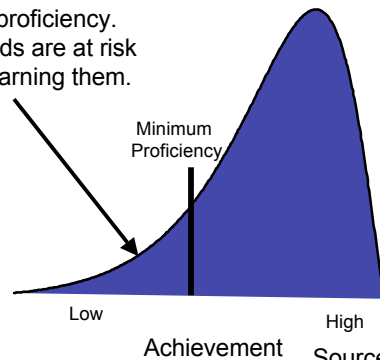
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Risk Model



Assumption:

All kids will learn basic skills to a basic level of proficiency. Some kids are at risk of not learning them.



Alternate Practice:

The job of the assessor is to identify students who are at risk of not learning basic skills to a minimum standard of proficiency. Also, the assessor identifies student patterns of performance on instructionally relevant subskills, curriculum, instruction and the environment to help identify problem etiology.

We use these data to help identify what and how to teach.

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Source: David Tilly (2005)

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Why so long to change?

- 30 years since Cronbach's (1975) retraction
- Why do we still engage in practices that have long been deemed as questionable?
 - 1) Education (Carnine, 1999) and School Psychology (Tilly, 2002) are young, immature professions
 - a) Evolving sciences typically develop from a philosophically-based system to a scientifically-based system
 - b) Growing failure for the "if this is true, then that would be true" philosophical method results in shift (Carnine, 1999, p. 3):
 - i. from judgments of individual experts to judgments constrained by quantified data that can be inspected by a broad audience
 - ii. less emphasis on personal trust and more emphasis on objectivity
 - iii. Diminished autonomy by experts and a greater role for standardized measures and procedures informed by scientific investigation
 - 2) Vested interests in the ATI philosophy (assessment vendors) (Gresham, 2005)
 - 3) Comfortable roles – identifiable experts

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Evidence the Current System Is NOT Working

- Extensive efforts to document efficacy of assessing processing strengths and learning modalities and then matching these to instructional strategies have failed to produce intended results (e.g. Kavale & Forness, 1987)
- Snider 1992: analogy basketball by tapes; no...requires tactile/kinesthetic skills. approach ignores *what* is to be learned
- Discrepancy model does not identify LD consistently across students or districts (Epps et al. 1984; Gottlieb et.al 1997, Beebe-Frankenberger & Bocian, 2005)
- No differences between discrepant and non-discrepant poor readers (Fletcher et al., 1994)
- Delay for treatment (wait to fail) creates a population of students who fall farther and farther behind their peers (Fletcher, 1998) – critical and short period when reading trajectories can be altered (Simmons & Kame'enui, 1998)

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And More Evidence.....

- If LD, then Special Education
 - Early studies failed to demonstrate the efficacy of special education placement (Carlberg & Kavale, 1980; Glass, 1983)
 - Studies indicated that LD students received instruction that did not differ from peers without disabilities (Thurlow & Ysseldyke, 1982), calling into question the differential service delivery assumption behind special education placements (Ysseldyke et al. 1989)
- “When performance over time is tracked, the gap in achievement performance of students in general and special education gets wider every year, with a continual decline in the performance of the group of students assigned to special education” (Reschly & Ysseldyke, 2002, p. 7)

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And, In Summary.....

- “The search for pathology dominates eligibility evaluations and confers an overall, often implicit, obsession with deficits that deflects attention from effective treatment and the explicit pursuit of goals related to adult social roles”
(Reschly & Ysseldyke, 2002, p. 7)

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Urgency of the Need for Change in Current Practices

- Schools faced with challenges: rising numbers of students, diversity, complexity, and severity of student behavior
- The need to prepare students for ever-changing workforce
- Increasing accountability requirements
- “because educational performance determines economic well being for individuals and society as a whole, widespread underachievement is detrimental and unacceptable to the public as well as to government and to business” (Carnine, 1999, p.3) – today’s conditions are a catalyst for change
- Students with learning and/or behavior problems often are chronic and associated with significant later life difficulties that are costly to society

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What is needed?....Systemic Change

- Schools need to adopt a systemic approach with a focus on prevention and early intervention (Hoagwood & Johnson, 2003; Hunter, 2003; Strein et al. 2003).
 - Critical period for reading (Simmons & Kame'enui, 1998)
 - Importance of early intervention for severe behavior problems (Kazdin, 1983; Biglan et al. 2003)
- Scholars in school psychology urge us to consider “the big picture” and to solve the “big instructional problems” our schools are facing (Shapiro, 2000; Ysseldyke, 2000).
- The “traditional” approaches can’t do this!

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Evidence for Problem Solving Approach

- Problem solving approach first posited by Susan Gray (1963)
- Data oriented problem solving “tools” support early intervention with specificity
 - Academic
 - CBA (e.g. Shapiro, 1996; 2004)
 - CBM (e.g. Deno, 1985; Shinn, 1989, 1998)
 - CBE (e.g. Howell & Nolet, 2000)
 - DIBELS (Good, Gruba & Kaminski, 2002)
 - Behavioral
 - FBA (e.g. Gresham & Noell, 1999; O'Neill et al., 1997; Witt et al., 2000)
 - Provides “what”, “why” and “what for”

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Evidence for Problem Solving Approach

- Effective intervention strategies for a wide range of presenting problems
- “Evidence-based practice” (EBP)
 - “refers to a body of scientific knowledge defined usually by reference to research methods or designs, about a range of service practices (e.g. referral, assessment, case management, therapies, or support services)” (Hoagwood & Johnson, 2003, p. 5)
- Strategies to evaluate EBPs continue to be articulated within the field of SPSY (e.g. Kratochwill & Shernoff, 2004; Kratochwill & Stoiber, 2000 a,b; 2002)
- Continue to improve intervention technology; do not assume interventions demonstrated as efficacious in one setting or population applies to others (Campbell, 1988; Cronbach, 1975)

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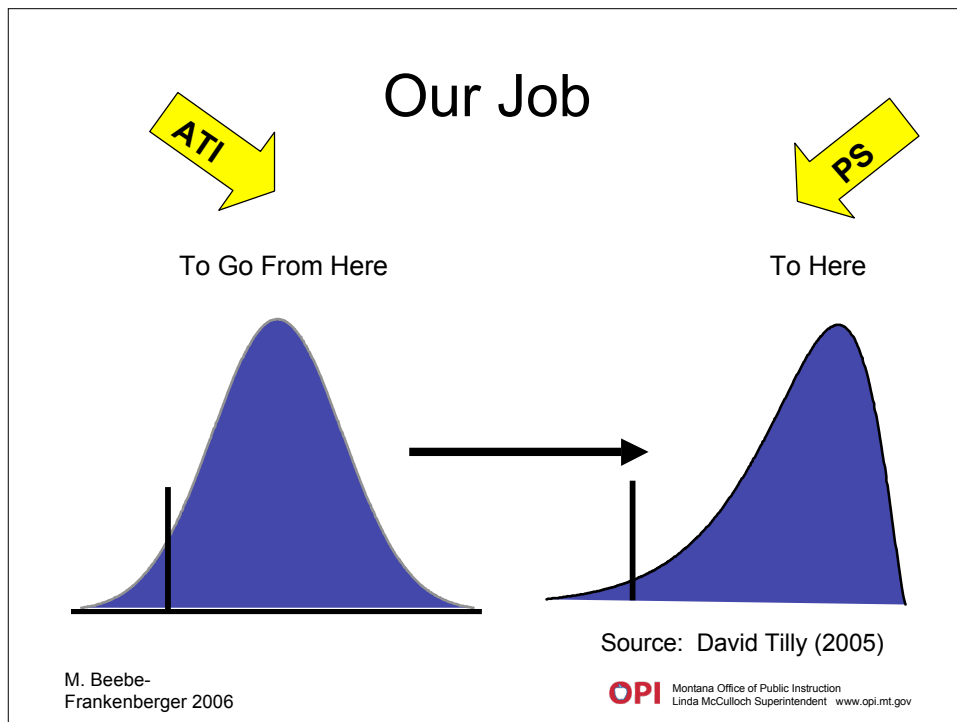
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Non-Categorical Approaches

- RTI with PS support non-categorical identification of those students entitled to supports offered by special education
 - “Non-categorical approaches facilitate placing more emphasis on gathering assessment information related to designing interventions that enhance competencies” (Reschly & Ysseldyke, 2002 p. 7)
 - Current systems search for pathology and produce labels that may be stigmatizing
- Categorical systems are limited but may have value in delineating the typical duration and developmental course of certain clusters of behaviors (e.g. ADHD and ODD). (Scotti et al. 1996)

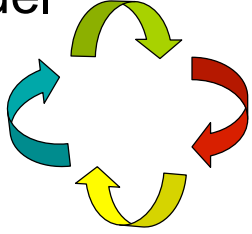
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Problem Solving Consultation Model

- Scientific method
- Feedback loop
- Data-based decision making
 - Eliminates bias
 - Takes subjectivity out of decisions
- Can be applied:
 - System vs. individual level
 - Regardless of “presenting problem”
- Problem Solving Teams are “pre-referral” teams who collaborate as “problem solvers”

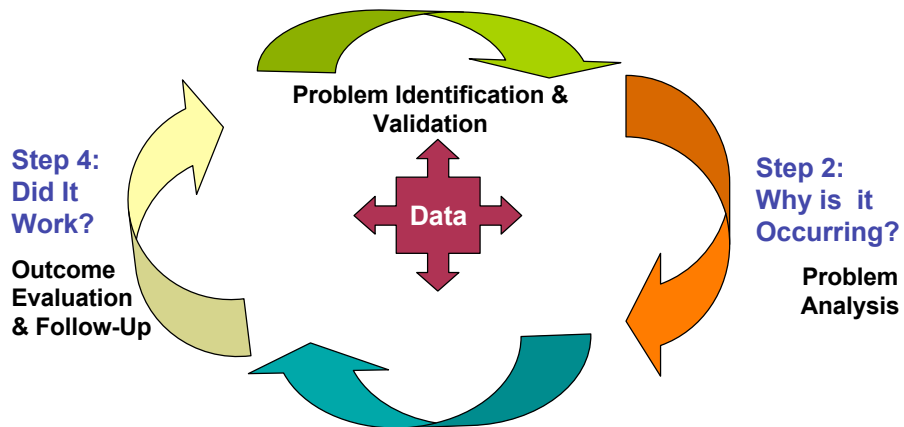


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The 4 Questions and 4 Steps in Problem Solving

Step 1: What is the Problem?



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The IDEAL Problem Solving Process

RBM, Idaho; Callendar 2005

- **I** - Identify the Problem
- **D** - Define the Problem
- **E** - Explore Intervention Options/Make a Plan
- **A** - Act on the Intervention Plan
- **L** - Look at Results

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The “Problem” Definition

Problem = What is Expected – Actual Performance
The difference between these is the “problem”

Example:

Expectation: **Johnny should read 60 WPM with 0 Error**

Performance: **Johnny reads 33 WPM with 5 Errors**

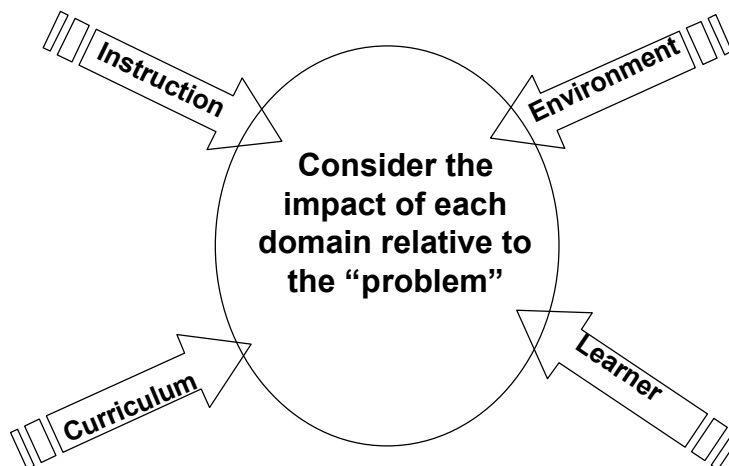
Problem: “27 WPM and 5 errors”

Problem Solve: How do we close the gap?

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Problem Identification and Analysis: Look at the Big Picture



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Data: ICEL/RIOT

ICEL

- Setting Demands:
 - Instruction
 - Curriculum
 - Environment
- Learner
 - Unique Characteristics

RIOT

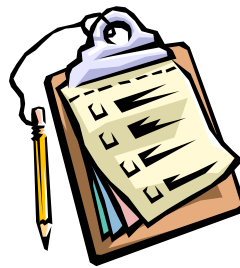
- Assess:
 - Records Review
 - Interviews
 - Student
 - Teachers
 - Parents
 - Observe
 - Test

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Example Sources of Meaningful Data

- School policy/standards
- School records
- Teacher records
- State/District assessments
- Work samples/CBA
- Portfolios
- Interviews
- CBM – DIBELS
- Observations



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Back from Break!



What is a School Psychologist? (www.nasponline.org)

- “School psychologists help children and youth *academically, socially, and emotionally.*”
- “They *team with educators, parents, and other mental health professionals* to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments for *all* students that strengthen connections between home and school.”

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Changing Scenes and Challenges

- **Changing Context**

- Political, economic and social forces of today
- “Nation At Risk” (1983)
 - “more and more young people emerge from high school ready neither for college nor for work.”

- **Challenges**

- Population increases “Baby Boom Echo”
- Population Mobility = instability in schools
- Students from more challenging contexts: increased poverty, increased violence, decreased early socialization
- Increased cultural diversity; heterogeneity

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Ysseldyke et al., (1997) School Psychology: A Blueprint for the Future. NASP



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Needs Assessment Given the Challenges Schools Face

- Requires Increased Collaboration
 - With parents/families
 - Community partners
- Shift away from psychometrics and labeling
 - “the practice of responding to diversity in the schools by creating more and more narrowly defined categorical school programs has little credibility”
 - “Use expertise in measurement, assessment and problem solving to move toward more diverse assessment of student learning and increased accountability” (p 3)
- Focus on Success for all students
- Expanded involvement, broader role

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Academic Skills are Basic to Children's Personal Wellness

(Chidsey-Brown, 2005)

- Children who do not develop basic academic skills in math, reading, and writing are much more likely to experience mental and physical illness later in life
- Adults without basic academic skills are:
 - Overrepresented in prison populations
 - Overrepresented in public welfare systems
 - Overrepresented in mental health systems
 - Overrepresented in poor health systems (chronic illnesses, early death)

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Implications for School Psychologists

(Chidsey-Brown, 2005)

- "School psychologists can enhance health by knowing about and using assessment and instructional support tools that foster academic competence"
- AND
- "School psychologists who can design, implement, and evaluate RTI programs in their schools will be providing essential services to promote academic wellness among all students."
(p.7)

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School Psychologist Skills



- **Problem Solving** Consultation
- **Assessment and Progress Monitoring** – data collection and interpretation
- **Intervention** – Academic, Behavioral, Social-Emotional working face-to-face with children and families to solve problems
- **Prevention Activities** – Assist in developing *school-wide* initiatives to make schools safe, healthy and effective

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School Psychologist Skills

- **Education** – Develop programs and presentations on topics such as
 - crisis response/management, learning strategies, classroom behavior management, social skills training, parent behavior training, and substance abuse
- **Research and Planning** – Evaluate program effectiveness, generate knowledge, evaluate outcomes to inform school restructuring or reform.
- **Health Care and Healthy Environments** – develop partnerships between parents, teachers and community focusing on psychosocial wellness

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Concerns About Change in Role

- School psychologists will not be needed if IQ testing is not mandated
- Without IQ-Achievement
 - will over-identify students with LD
 - will lead to minority overrepresentation
- Eliminating IQ test criteria will identify many slow learners as LD
- Who will we be if not “gatekeepers?”

Canter, A (2003) Viewpoint: Recommendation regarding LD identification: Fear Versus Data. NASP Communique May 2003, Vol 31 #7, p 9-10

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The Paradigm Shift

- From “child-focus” to *systemic* supports for *all* children to achieve academic and social competence
- From “what’s wrong with this child?”
- To “What supports does this child need to be successful?”
 - Strengths-based
 - Outcomes-based
- Proactive, preventative, positive

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Strengths-Based Systems

- If we ask people to look for deficits, we will find deficits and their view of situations will be colored by this.
- If we ask people to look for successes, they will usually find success and their view of situations will be colored by this (p. 82) Kral, 1992.



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Strengths-Based Perspectives and Beliefs (Epstein, 2005)

- All children/youth have strengths.
- A child can be motivated by how teachers, parents and others respond to them in a positive way.
- When strengths are identified and emphasized, this heightens motivation to be actively engaged.
- **Failure of a child to demonstrate a strength does not mean a deficit on the part of the child.**
- Given sufficient experience, instruction and opportunities by his school, family or community a person is capable of demonstrating many strengths
- Education, mental health and social services treatment plans and services for children need to be strengths-based.

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Strengths-based Assessment

- **Leads to positive parent-professional relationships**
- Johnson and Friedman, 1991. **Strengths based assessment leads to positive engagement of kids and students.**
- Ronnan & Poertner, 1993. **The identification of what is going well in the life of a child.**
- Ropp & Wintersteen, 1989. **Remind professionals of the competencies that can provide the basis of future growth and to establish positive expectations for children.**

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Decisions About Entitlement to Special Education

- Focus of assessment for entitlement is on *how to effectively support future learning*
 - Multiple sources of data
 - Systematically collected data are reviewed
 - Performance
 - Intervention intensity
 - Learner's characteristics and conditions that impede or enhance learning are systematically reviewed.
 - Assess strengths to support future learning

Source: Grimes, J., Kurns, S (2003, December). *An Intervention-based System for Addressing NCLB and IDEA Expectations: A Multiple Tiered Model to Ensure Every Child Learns*. Paper presented at the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities Responsiveness-to-Intervention Symposium, Kansas City, MO.

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School Psychologist as Problem Solver

- In “gatekeeper” role school psychologists use data for entitlement decisions
 - link assessment to intervention and realistic IEP goals
 - RTI process provides the data to determine level of supports to be provided for learning
 - School psychologists may continue assessing for supplemental information that may be needed to inform support needs, family needs or referrals to other services

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School Psychologists Expand Scope of Services School-wide Primary Intervention

- Screen for children/youth at risk for academic and/or social, behavioral or emotional problems
- Assist in collection and Interpretation of data about academic and positive behavior supports
- Provide social skills trainings & positive behavior support programs
- Resource for parents of *all* children/youth
- Resource to principal, *all* teachers, staff
- Crisis prevention and intervention coordinator

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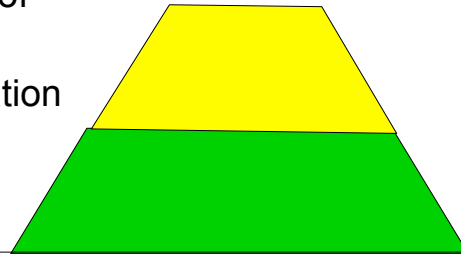
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School Psychologists Expand Scope of Services:

Secondary Prevention

- Consult for design and implementation of small group interventions
- Help select evidenced-based curriculum, methods
- Collect progress monitoring, treatment integrity data
- Assist in interpretation of Data & Information
- Home-school collaboration
- Outcome evaluation

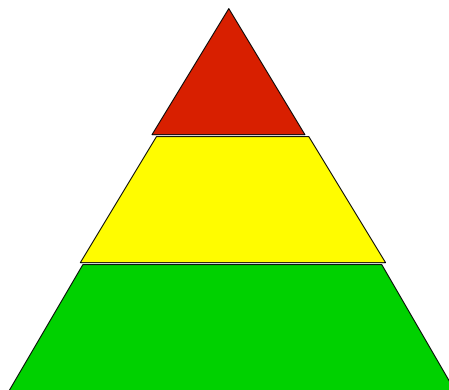
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School Psychologists Expand Scope of Services **Tertiary Intervention**

- Functional based assessment
 - Consult design and implementation of interventions
 - Collect progress monitoring, treatment integrity data
 - Assist in interpretation of information
 - Home-school collaboration
 - Outcome evaluation
 - Provide referrals for supplemental supports if needed
- Formal Evaluation for Entitlement to Special Education Supports ★

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What's the Prognosis for School Psychologists?

- Will we keep our jobs?
- Will we have the skills?
- How do we know what will happen?.....

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Heartland AEA (IA) vs. National Patterns of School Psychology Practice

Reschly, D.J., Ikeda, M.J., Tilly, W.D.III., Allison, R., Grimes, J.P., & Upah, K.F. (2000, April). *School psychology without IQ: Roles, assessment, satisfaction, supervision, and evaluation*. Symposium, Annual Convention of the National Association of School Psychologists, New Orleans, LA.

Conducted Study:

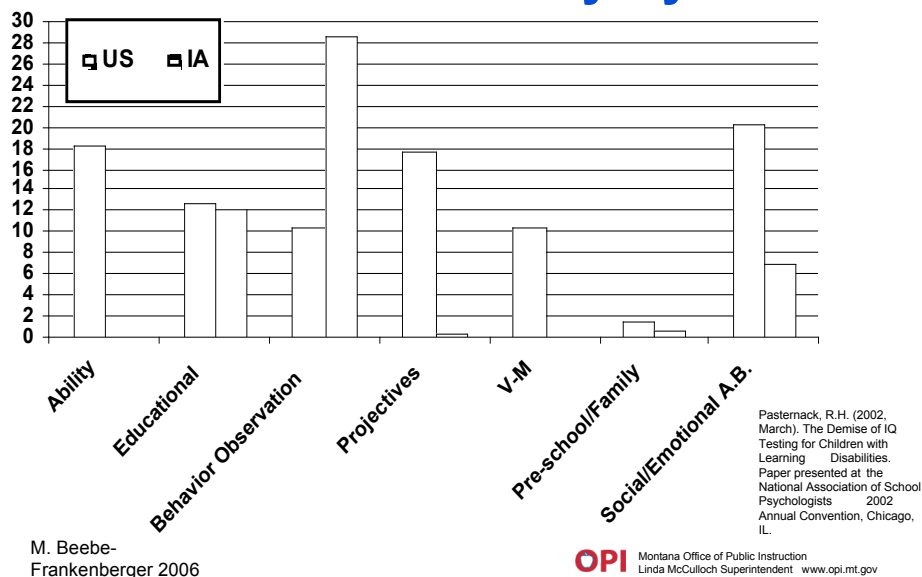
**Compared Heartland school psychologists
(*N* = 60) to a national sample (*N* = 900)**

Pasternack, R.H. (2002, March). The Demise of IQ Testing for Children with Learning Disabilities. Paper presented at the National Association of School Psychologists 2002 Annual Convention, Chicago, IL.

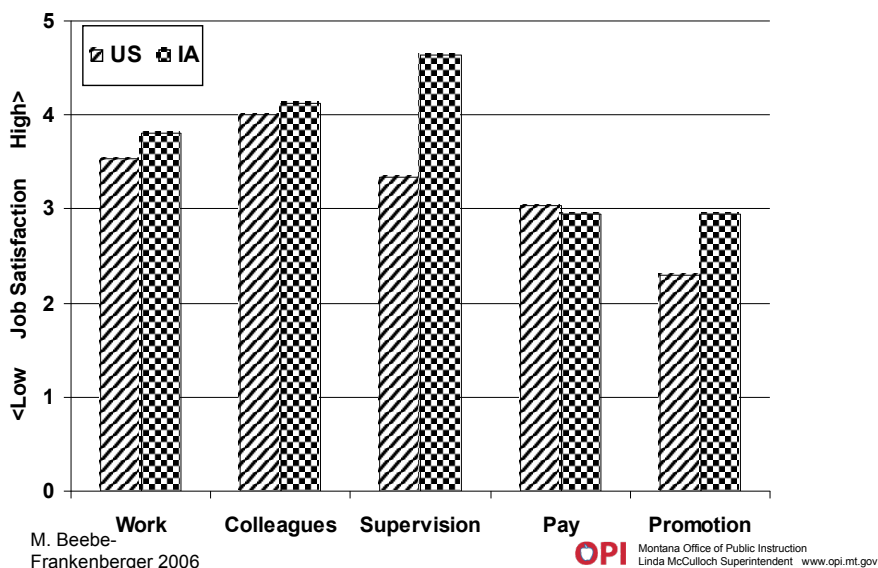
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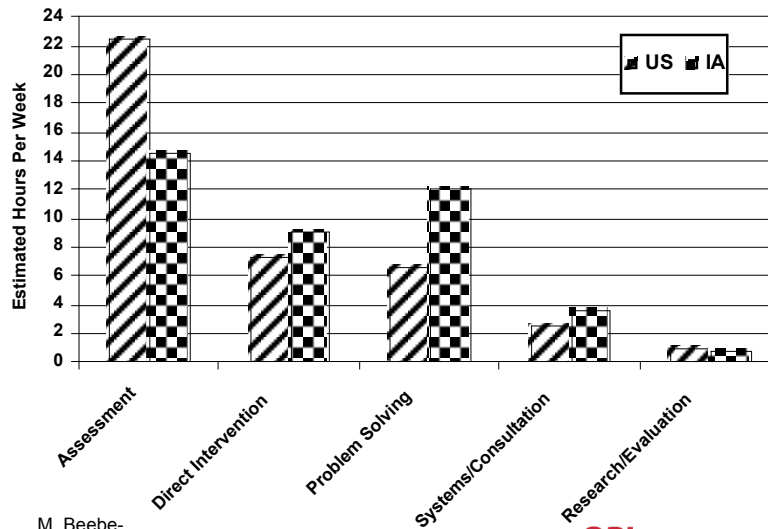
SPSY Assessment in Traditional & Alternative Delivery Systems



School Psychologists' Job Satisfaction: U.S. and Iowa



Current Roles of School Psychologists in the U.S. and Iowa



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Fagan & Wise (2000) Predict the Future

- “ The future is heavily related to being able to overcome the images of our past, but we must not lose sight of the fact that the school psychologist has been, and will continue to be, the *best trained person in assessment* in most educational communities. If our future is bright, then we will be perceived as among the *best trained persons in interventions as well.*” (p.22)

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School Psychologists are Collaborators

- The Paradigm Shift is across the educational system.....
- School psychologists work with
 - Principals
 - All teachers
 - Students
 - Parents/families
 - Community
- All educators are responsible for *all* children and their outcomes.



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For Who We STILL Serve.....



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